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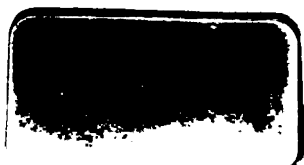
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ON

# IMPLEMENTS FOR THE BATH

FOUND AT URDINGEN,

BY GEORGE WITT, ESQ., F.R.S.

WITH

NOTES ON INSCRIBED STRIGILS,

BY CHARLES THOMAS NEWTON, ESQ., M.A.

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COMMUNICATED TO THE SOCIETY OF ANTIQUARIES  
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## IMPLEMENTS OF THE BATH

### FOUND AT URDINGEN.

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THE Romans are said to have ascribed their power of conquering the world as much to the strigil as to the sword; in other words, the exercises appertaining to the bath rendered their limbs so supple, and their bodily movements so active and powerful, that it was rare for them to find any other people who could long stand against them in the hand-to-hand engagements which characterised the warfare of those times.

It need hardly be said that the strigil (in Greek *ξυστήρις*) is a curved instrument, generally made of metal, with which the frequenters of the bath scraped from their bodies the refuse and dead material which had been brought to the surface in the *calidarium*, or hot chamber. The strigil was uniformly regarded by the ancients as the emblem of the bath, and as such it is frequently to be found carved in stone, in bas-relief, over the door of the principal entrance to the building.

Strigils were made of various substances, such as gold, silver, bronze, iron, bone, ivory, tortoise-shell, and wood. The four latter, from the perishable nature of the materials, are now rarely to be found; the two first (those of gold and silver), from their precious qualities, have for the most part been consigned to the melting-pot; oxidization has destroyed the greater part of the specimens in iron; while to the bronze we are mainly indebted for handing down to us the exact form and characteristics of this instrument.

The well-known bunch of strigils, together with the oil-bottle (*guttus* or *ampulla*) and *patera*, all suspended on the same ring, and preserved in the Museo Borbonico at Naples, have long attracted the attention of antiquaries.\* They were found hung up in one of the rooms of a bath at Pompeii, and altogether they form a most interesting and instructive group. The *patera* is the shallow

\* Grivaud de la Vincelle, *Arts et Métiers*, pl. lxxiii.

vessel into which the oil was poured from the oil-bottle, for the purpose of facilitating the process of anointing.

It is difficult to overstate the importance of athletic exercises, especially in an enervating climate like that of Southern Italy. Hence the institution of the bath, with all its concomitant games and trials of strength, became the crowded resort of all classes of the community. It was regarded not only as tending to cleanliness and as a preservative from disease, but as a national institution which secured to the Roman people a marked pre-eminence over surrounding nations.

It is quite beside the present purpose to enter into any details of the structure of the baths, those vast buildings which once constituted the greatest ornaments of ancient Rome, comprising as they did an assemblage of courts and halls of a magnitude quite inconceivable at the present day. Some of them covered several acres of ground, and afforded accommodation to thousands of persons at the same time.

That the early Roman Emperors duly appreciated the advantages of the bath is shown by the fact that it was always an object of their especial patronage, and it was the greatest ambition of each of them to distinguish his reign by the foundation of a bath, and to encourage its use among the people by his frequent presence. In illustration of this fact, Spartianus relates an amusing incident of the Emperor Hadrian, who one day recognising an old soldier at the bath rubbing himself against one of the pillars of the building, asked him why he did this. The soldier replied that he had no slave to rub him; upon which Hadrian gave him two slaves, and wherewithal to support them. On the next occasion that the Emperor visited the bath, he saw five other old soldiers rubbing themselves in a similar manner. Hadrian, perceiving their drift, immediately said that now there was no difficulty, as they could rub each other!

Among a people so essentially military as the Romans it can be readily understood that the generals of their various armies, following the example of their emperors, set especial value on the bath, and introduced it, as a sanitary agent, in the construction of their permanent encampments. Many of these generals were entrusted with the command of distant armies, often isolated in the midst of the enemy's country, and left entirely to their own individual responsibility, and to them the health of their troops was necessarily an object of the most anxious solicitude. Proofs of their sagacity and foresight on this head are to be found at the present day in the ruins of such of these encampments as have best escaped the ravages of time and demolition. A Roman castrum was not long since uncovered (about the year 1850) by the Landgrave of Hesse-Homburg among the Taunus

hills in Germany, within a few miles of Homburg, where may still be seen, at one corner of the fortifications, the ruins of a bath with the flue-tiles and other attributes distinctly visible. From the extent of the foundations of the hot chamber it may be calculated that it was capable of accommodating about twenty soldiers at a time. Situate as was this encampment in the midst of the enemy's country, and surrounded by a fierce hostile people, it was impossible for the men to take exercise outside the walls of the camp without the danger of being cut off. Might not the general in command of that station fairly attribute to the agency of the bath the safety of his whole detachment, and the consequent retention of the Roman supremacy in that part of Germany during the winter, until the return of fine weather enabled him to resume active operations?

It is well known that under Drusus there were various detachments of Roman troops engaged in the subjugation of Germany, and other generals besides the one in command on the Taunus mountains may have equally experienced the advantages of the bath in the preservation of the health of their troops; and, conjecture though it be, may it not be inferred that one of them, in the fulness of his gratitude for the benefits derived from that institution, may have directed all his bath implements to be buried with him, in conformity with the well-known custom of the Romans to cast on the funeral pile of their friends the most costly articles in their possession as the highest testimony of their reverence and esteem?

Be all this as it may, the collection of bath implements now exhibited to the Society was found in 1861 in a stone coffin near the Roman military station of Gelduba, not far from the village of Urdingen, on the left bank of the Rhine, near Düsseldorf.

The circumstances under which these relics were found excited at the time much interest in that part of Germany. Details of the discovery were given in the local newspapers of the day, which display amusing ignorance on the part of the writers. Solitary strigils have been frequently found in Roman coffins, but there is no other instance on record of the discovery in a tomb of so complete and instructive a set of the implements of the bath.

The following is a translation of the account given in the *Crefeld Gazette* of the 7th of May 1861:—

“In the afternoon of the 25th of April 1861 two labourers working in a gravel-pit near Latum, in the circle of Crefeld, not far from Urdingen, came upon a large stone coffin with a heavy cover, the whole in a state of tolerable preservation. Unfortunately, in the first moment of surprise, the men neglected to take any

precaution in disinterring the sarcophagus, but they broke the cover or lid, after partially removing the sand and gravel, in order the more speedily to get at the contents, which, however, can have hardly satisfied the expectations of the finders.

“ On the next day, when the labourers resumed their work, they came upon another smaller sarcophagus, at the distance of about two spades' width from the spot where the first was found. In the lid of the smaller coffin there were several cracks or crevices which facilitated the opening. The coffins were placed at right angles to each other, at a depth of about a foot and a half from the surface, the point of the angle being in the direction of Gellep, the Roman station of Gelduba mentioned by Tacitus and Pliny, which is situate at a distance of about two miles, in a northerly direction, from the spot where the antiquities were found.

“ A nearer investigation of the latter gave the following results:—The first sarcophagus was five feet seven inches long, two feet ten inches broad, and two feet high. The inside breadth was at most two feet, the inside depth one foot ten inches and a half. At one end inside there was a ledge or projection seven inches and a half high measured from the bottom, and fifteen inches wide, which seems to have served for the reception of the articles placed in the coffin. These consisted of five earthenware vessels, viz. First, a dish made of *terra sigillata* (Samian ware), with the potter's inscription LEO . FEC; secondly, two cups of dark yellow clay and two pale yellow jugs with handles, such as those that are commonly found in the neighbourhood of Gellep, Asberg, and Xanten. Remains of burnt bones, ashes, and several pieces of broken glass, were found at the bottom of the coffin.

“ The second sarcophagus was five feet four inches long, two feet broad, and one foot two inches high. The inside breadth was one foot four inches, the inside depth nine inches, and at each end were ledges two inches high, the one being eleven inches and the other only six inches in length; the former is cut out in the shape of a semicircle, the latter forms a step, like the one in the larger coffin. The lids of both sarcophagi are somewhat higher in the middle than along the sides, which gives to them the appearance of a slightly coped roof.

“ The following articles of bronze, iron, and glass were found in the last-named coffin :—

“ 1. A small oval vessel with narrow neck and two small handles, to which are attached slight chains four inches and a half long; these are fastened at the other end to a ring; a third little chain is also fastened to this ring, which is attached at the other end to the stopper of the vessel. Through the ring passes a





BRONZE HANGING AND CUTTUS FROM BIRKENES

thin cross-bar four inches long, which, with the semicircular curve above it, forms the handle.

“ 2 and 3. From each side of this bar, also on a ring, hangs a sickle-shaped plate or blade, ten inches long, bent outwardly towards the bottom, which is fixed to a round handle with an obtuse termination. The workmanship of every part of this curious object is very beautiful. It is of pure metal and in good preservation, but what has been its use, and whether it is a domestic or agricultural utensil, we do not venture to pronounce.

“ 4. A metal cylinder, two inches high, with a loose cover, in the middle of which there is a small round opening.

“ 5. The greater portion of a knife-blade of iron, from which the massive bronze handle has been broken off.

“ 6. A very prettily formed glass vase, five and a half inches high, with a handle, and with wavy ornaments of molten glass.

“ 7. A tazza or drinking-cup of white glass, with two rows of projections in glass on the outer surface.

“ 8. A smaller bottle injured at the top and bottom.

“ 9. A glass bowl with a handle and ornaments like those of No. 6, but which was unfortunately broken in consequence of careless handling.

“ Besides these articles there were in the sarcophagus a quantity of charred bones and black earth. No inscription has been discovered, nor have any coins been found.

“ As to the material of which the sarcophagi are made, it is a kind of yellow trachite or tufa, interspersed with numerous black spots and a little feldspar and mica, and also with numerous cavities, partly empty and partly filled with yellow ochre, such as is still quarried in the Sieben-Gebirge and in the countries around the Middle Rhine.

“ Both sarcophagi were, by the care of Mr. C. Herken, transported to Lätum, and there placed under cover in his yard, where they await their further destination.”<sup>a</sup>

It will be seen from the several objects now submitted for the inspection of the Society, that they consist of four vessels of glass and five implements of bronze. Like the famous bunch of strigils at Naples, we have here the bronze *guttus* hung on the same ring as the strigils, but without the bronze patera; in this instance the patera is of glass. The bronze *guttus* (Plate XXIV.) is of good workmanship, cor-

<sup>a</sup> *Crefelder Zeitung*. Dienstag, den 7 Mai, 1861.



rugated in a succession of horizontal circles, furnished with two handles, to each of which chains are attached six inches long, by which it is fastened to the ring. On the under-surface of the metal stopper of the oil-bottle there are two thin plates of bronze for the purpose of fastening the cork or some kind of soft wood. This stopper is also suspended by a chain.

The strigils have cylindrical handles, in which respect they differ from those commonly seen in the public museums of Italy. The handles, moreover, are studded with little knobs or projections, in order that they may be more securely held by hands moistened with oil or perspiration. The whole is not unlike the club borne by Hercules. The points of these strigils also turn backwards instead of forming a regular curve. It is interesting that this form of strigil, apparently peculiar, should have been found in Britain, as will be seen by reference to Archdeacon Battely's *Antiquitates Rutupinæ*,<sup>a</sup> pl. xii. p. 115.

The ring to which the whole are attached is of an elliptical form above and straight below. The straight portion is split somewhat like a modern key-ring, to admit of the removal of the implements.



BRONZE BOX.

Unattached to the foregoing is a cylindrical vessel, rather more than two inches in length, and about an inch in diameter, which may have served for an unguent pot. In general form it is not unlike a Roman inkstand, and is represented in the annexed figure.

The fifth metal instrument is a knife with a bronze handle, six inches long, the iron of which is much oxidized; the shape of the blade is peculiar, terminating in a broad concave end. (Plate XXV. fig. 3)

The four glass vessels consist of the following:—1. A bottle of white glass, originally about four inches high and three in diameter, much broken. (Plate XXV. fig. 1.) 2. A patera, four inches in diameter, and about an inch deep, and, as stated in the Crefeld Gazette, considerably damaged. (Plate XXV. fig. 5). The handle is short, and the back of the patera is ornamented with serpentine streaks of blue glass in relief. 3. A cup, three inches in diameter, and two inches and a quarter deep. It is studded round its middle with several sharp points, possibly for security in handling. (Plate XXV. fig. 2.) 4. A jug of beautiful form, five inches high, and two and three quarters in diameter at its widest part. (Plate XXV. fig. 4.) Like the patera it is covered

<sup>a</sup> The original strigil is in the Library of Trinity College, Cambridge.



Fig 1.



Fig 2



Fig 3



Fig 4.



Fig 5

OBJECTS IN GLASS AND BRONZE FROM URDINGEN.



all round with blue glass ornamentation. The whole of these glass vessels are covered with the muddy infiltration from the overflowing of the Rhine.\*

Although such frequent allusions to the use of the strigil are to be found in classic authors, yet, as might be expected in a matter of such daily routine as the bath, there is great paucity of details as to the manner in which it was carried out. The drawings sometimes found on Greek vases of persons using the strigil have alone served to give us any ideas on this head; hence the discovery in Rome in 1849 of the statue of the "Athlete using the Strigil," mentioned by Pliny, if only a copy, is at any rate a valuable acquisition to our knowledge on this point. In Murray's *Hand-Book of Rome* for 1858 will be found the following account of this discovery:—

"Athlete, a semi-colossal statue, found in the *Vicolo delle Palme* in the *Trastevere*, near the spot where the *Bronze Horse* in the *Capitoline Museum* was discovered. So admirably has this statue been preserved, that, although one arm and both legs were broken, none of the pieces were missing, and the only restoration necessary was a small fragment of the nose and some of the fingers of the right hand, which have been carefully restored by Professor *Tenerani*. It is of Greek marble, and represents a wrestler or athlete in the act of cleaning his arm with a 'strigil.' *Canina*, who directed the excavation in which it was found, and the Roman artists generally, regard it as a work of the highest art, and declare it to be the production of *Lysippus*, (B. C. 325,) his celebrated *Ἀποξυόμενος*, which is said by Pliny to have so pleased *Tiberius*, that the Emperor caused it to be transported from the *Baths of Agrippa* to his own palace, but from the clamour of the people was obliged to restore it to the original situation.

"To the objection that Pliny's description of that statue applies to a work in bronze, *Canina* replies that it may be a repetition of the bronze one by *Lysippus*. If this hypothesis be correct, the statue is the first work of *Lysippus* which has come down to us, and is additionally interesting as being one of the few mentioned by Pliny. Whatever be its origin, it is one of the few examples which have yet been found in statuary of an athlete smoothing or cleaning his skin with the strigil, though paintings of such are to be seen at *Naples* and on *Etruscan vases*. The present statue is holding the strigil with his left hand, and is cleaning with it his right arm, which he holds extended for the purpose. His countenance

\* Mr. Witt, before his death, which took place in February, 1869, presented to the British Museum this curious set of antiquities, together with the remarkable series of strigils and other bath implements which he had collected.—C. S. P.

is ideal; his head is small, his neck rather thick, and his shoulders show vigour and force, while his legs hardly surpass the natural size. This apparent incongruity is explained by the Roman artists as indicating that the sculptor wished to represent not only a wrestler, but a runner; his strength being shown by the size of his shoulders, his small head, and his short neck, as in the statues of Hercules; while his lightness and quickness in running are shown by his legs, which are strong, nervous, and rather long. The disc in the right hand is a modern and unauthorised addition."

Dr. S. Birch, F.S.A. has kindly called my attention to a curious document published by M. Letronne, in the *Journal des Savants*, 1833, under the title "Récompense promise à qui découvrira ou ramènera deux esclaves échappés d'Alexandrie." It is a fac-simile of a Greek papyrus preserved in the Louvre, and which is believed to belong to the reign of Ptolemy Euergetes II. (B. C. 146). The reward is offered for the discovery of two runaway slaves. One of them is described as Hermon, belonging to Aristogenes son of Chrysippus of Alabanda in Caria. In the description of the slave he is stated to have *κρίκον σιδηροῦν ἐν ᾧ λήκυθος καὶ ξύστραι*, an iron ring on which are an oil-vase and strigils. M. Letronne remarks that a mere portable set of strigils with an oil-vase would soon be thrown away by the slave, and that it is more probable that he wore an iron ring, either a necklet or armlet, on which these bath implements were engraved. The slave bearing the bath implements appears by the Greeks to have been termed *ξυστρολήκυθος* or *στλεγγιδολήκυθος*. A young negro carrying these implements may be found in the Museo Pio-Clementino, and is engraved in the work describing that collection, tom. iii. pl. xxxv.

As regards the discovery of strigils in tombs, it may not be amiss to remind the Society that in one of the large sepulchral barrows in Essex, excavated by the late Mr. Rookwood Gage in 1835, and known as the Bartlow Hills, a pair of strigils was discovered. They were accompanied by a lamp, a beautiful bronze *præfericulum* and *patera*, a curious enamelled vase, other bronze and glass vessels, together with a folding seat of iron, which it has been conjectured indicated the magisterial rank of the person with whose remains it had been interred. These relics are engraved and described in the *Archæologia*, vol. xxv. p. 300.

## NOTES ON INSCRIBED STRIGILS.

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IN the interesting collection of antiquities from the Cyrenaica which the Museum has recently acquired through Mr. Dennis, is the handle of a bronze strigil, on which are stamped the words ΤΡΙΑΚΑΤΙΩΝ ΑΘΛΩΝ. The letters, which are in relief within an oblong incuse, are of a good period. The τριακάς was a political division of the φυλή at Athens, and of the ὠβή at Sparta, and the τριακάτιοι were the ephebi belonging to a τριακάς. In an inscription discovered by Smith and Porcher at Cyrene, and published in their History of Discoveries, p. 110, No. 6, which gives a list of various military divisions, we find, line 14, τριακατιάρχαι, and lines 51 and 52, ζύμμ[οροι]? τοῖς τριακατίοις. This inscription, taken in connection with that on the strigil, confirms the statement of Eustath. in Odyss. p. 292, l. 26, ed. Lips. 1825, ἐν Κυρήνῃ τοὺς ἐφήβους τριακατίους καλοῦσι. See Hesych. s. v. τριακάτιοι, ed. Albert. ii. p. 1412, and note 26, ibid. The inscription on the strigil shows that it was the prize given to the ephebi, probably for a victory in some gymnastic contest.

In the British Museum is the handle of a strigil, inscribed ΠΑΡ ΣΥΜΜΑΧΟΥ, formerly in the Temple Collection; and in the Corpus Inscriptionum, Nos. 8527-8527b, five inscribed strigils are published, four of which read Ἀπολλοδώρῳ, and the fifth Ἀγλάῳ. These names are probably those of the makers of the strigils, as on one specimen the full form παρ Χρησίμου εἰμι occurs; see Garrucci, *Dissertazioni Archeologiche, Roma* 1864, p. 136.

The British Museum contains other inscribed strigils. On one Herakles is represented within an oval incuse, shooting an arrow at the Nemean lion; on another, from the Blacas Collection, is a phallus in a circular incuse. Both these are inscribed ΣΩΓΕΝΕΣ. On another, inscribed ΣΩΤΕΡ, is the type of a cow suckling her calf, as on the coins of Dyrrhachium. For other instances of inscribed strigils, see the article by Detlefsen, in the *Bulletino* of the Roman Institute, 1863, p. 21, and ibid. p. 188; Garrucci, *ubi supra*, pp. 133-142

















































































































































































